DEMOGRAPHIC VARIATIONS IN PUBLIC VIEWS OF RESPONSE TO AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EXAMINING THE PERCEIVED ROLES OF PUBLIC/SOCIAL POLICIES, GOVERNMENT EMERGENCY POWERS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

This study examined the demographic variations in public views of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the proportion of responses to items on social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic, government emergency powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic and roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic. A web-based survey design was employed to elicit data from 600 respondents. Findings showed that although many respondents supported the lockdowns of various states and a cessation of social and economic activity, they were not satisfied with the implementation of many of the social policies that the government had designed to respond to and manage the resulting challenges of Covid-19.As to the political response and management of the lockdowns and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many people expressed the views that the government and law enforcement agents have abused their emergency powers. Many

respondents understood what their roles were as responsible citizens in a time like this. Overall, findings accentuate the likely impact of such socio-demographic factors as gender, age, educational status and financial sufficiency in public views of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. While this study reflects respondents' assessment or rating of government efforts in addressing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, it also provides a link between socioeconomic vulnerability of social groups and the perceived successes resulting from societal response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Key words: *Coronavirus, Covid-19, Pandemic, Nigeria, social/public policy, emergency powers, citizen participation*

Introduction

Politics and public/social policies are two important aspects of public health responses to complex emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic. Greer et al. (2020) have indicated that it is difficult to understand the various responses to the effects of the pandemic without considering the roles of public/social policies and politics. A review of past health emergencies similar to Covid-19 pandemic has indicated that public policy responses towards virus pandemic/outbreaks (aside HIV/AIDS) were not as exhaustive as the policy responses towards natural disasters and economic crises (Tirivayi et al., 2020). Due to the disproportionately negative consequences of the virus pandemics along demographic lines (i.e., sex, age, economic status, etc.), stakeholders have advised that public/social policy responses should be child-sensitive, gender-responsive and must target vulnerable groups (Tirivayi et al., 2020).

Beside the issues of policy programs during such periods, many people have expressed worries about the impact of politics on public health emergency responses. The Covid-19 crisis has perhaps increased these anxieties in many parts of the globe. Transparency International (TI, 2020), indicated that the pandemic has offered corrupt and authoritarian leaders the opportunity to undermine free press and independent judiciary as well as trample on fundamental human rights (i.e., right to protest, join association or engage in activities to monitor government spending). For example, the leaders of Hungary, Israel and the Philippines were reported to have used the Coronavirus crises as a smokescreen to grab power and render useless the institutions that put their respective governments in check (McCarthy, Estrin & Kakissis, 2020). TI also illustrated how political leaders in Brazil attempted to exploit the Covid-

19 crisis to deregulate the Amazon, while disregarding opinions from the press, and the Congress. From across Europe, South America, Asia to Africa, reports of political leaders and representatives of law enforcement agencies tilting towards gross misconduct and abuse of office/power continue to surface in the media during this pandemic.

While people in some quarters believe that the crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic has given rise to wide spread authoritarian tendencies, there are those who are of the opinion that the pandemic is strengthening democracies in several parts of the world. Yeyati and Malamud (2020) noted that in countries such as the U.S. and Brazil, there has been stiff resistance to government policies. The opposition, according to Yeyati and Malamud (2020), has emerged not only from public opinion, sub-national authorities, and members of Congress, but also from the key members of the judiciary and even members of the Cabinet. Recent research has also supported this assertion. Ginsburg and Versteeg (2020) found that, contrary to common expectations, courts, legislatures and sub-national governments have played three crucial roles in checking the excesses of the executive: (1) maintaining the procedural integrity of invocations of emergency to be followed; (2) engaging in firm review of rights restrictions, striking the needed balance between human rights issues and public health concerns; and (3) occasionally demanding that government take affirmative action to confront the COVID-19 virus and its impacts.

In addition, the roles that citizens play in responding to the Covid-19 lockdown and the approved safety guidelines (made by the WHO and domestic health authorities in different countries) have been a central topic discussed in several forums. Put differently, the need for voluntary participation by citizens to self-quarantine, self-isolate, practice social distancing, wear masks, avoid unnecessary travels has been emphasized. Amidst several public debates about the efficacy of these safety practices in the prevention of Coronavirus, taking personal responsibility by adhering to the Covid-19 safety guidelines is still considered the best preventive approach at the moment. In South-Korea, Shaw et al. (2020) identified the combination of government's counteractive measures and citizens' engagement that helped to reduce the number of confirmed cases to 75 as of March 15, 2020. Marston (2020) also highlighted the important role of community participation in the overall Covid-19 response; from obeying lockdown restrictions, to the steps that need to be taken as nations suspend lockdown restrictions, to community engagement that is characterized by volunteering. This therefore suggests that citizens could play a vital role in improving the effectiveness of government response during the crisis.

Because social/public policies and political responses are approaches that directly impact peoples' lives during crises, it is important that we begin to look

at the perspectives of people who are themselves the focus in governance. By so doing, we might begin to understand the varying perspectives of the general public across demographic groups with regards to how the current social/public policies and the political permutations during the Covid-19 crises affect the public. Knowledge of how these demographic variables (sex, age, economic status, etc.) help to explain social/public policies, political responses and citizens' participation can inform government and key stakeholders on adapting policy decisions capable of minimizing the negative socio-economic and political impacts of the outbreak on the people.

As a consequence, this paper examines the demographic variations in public views of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Nigeria occupies an important position in the African region due to its large population and enormous economic potentials. It is said that out of every four Africans one is a Nigerian. And out of every five individuals who are of African descent, one is a Nigerian (West Africa Gateway, 2012). These realities put Nigeria at the forefront of the fight against the virus. Nigeria like many other countries is seeing a surge in Covid19 cases and the government has taken numerous health, social and economic measures to cushion the effect of the virus on the people. The major strategic responses of the Federal Republic of Nigeria include the Economic Stimulus Bill 2020, cash transfers, Central Bank of Nigeria stimulus package and food assistance. Nevertheless, some of the policy responses have weaknesses and collectively, fail to matchup with the enormity of the crises (Dixit et al., 2020). For example, the government said that it will make cash transfers of 20,000 Naira ($52) to poor and vulnerable households registered in the National Social Register (NSR). Regrettably, the NSR which has about 11 million people (out of a total of 87 million poor Nigerians who live on less than $1.90 a day) on its platform was only able to reach a fraction of the target (Dixit et al., 2020). At about the same time, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Management and Social Development promised that it would provide food portions to vulnerable households in the states hardest hit by surges in the Covid-19 virus. As with the case of the cash transfer, the government did not live up to expectation. The distribution of the food was allegedly marred by fraud and grimy transparency (Dixit et al., 2020).

At the political front, the enforcement of the various lockdown measures by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the bid to fight the Coronavirus pandemic raised some concerns that Nigeria as a country was returning to the authoritarian past where strong armed tactics were used to enforce compliance to orders (Odah & Yau, 2020). The April 14th report of the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission, revealed a total of 105 complaints spreading over 24 out the 36 states of the federation including the FCT (Odah & Yau, 2020).

Lagos and Abuja topped complaints of violation of human rights with 28 and 10 incidents, respectively (Odah & Yau, 2020). Yet, the strategic role of the citizens in responding to the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic, is not clear. So far, these issues have raised important questions which the current study is attempt to answer:

What are the demographic variations in public views of the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

What are the demographic variations in public views of government's emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

What are the demographic variations in public views with regards to the roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

Methodology

A web-based survey design was employed. Couper (2000) saw the multimedia capability of Web surveys as a real advantage because of their relative cost effectiveness. Other advantages as identified by Zanutto (2001) include: a quicker response rate; easier to send reminders to participants; easier to process data; dynamic error checking capability; option of putting questions in random order; the ability to make complex skip pattern questions easier to follow; the inclusion of pop-up instructions for selected questions; and, the use of drop-down boxes. Additionally, since a face to face survey design might be difficult to conduct at a time like this, we adopted the web-based survey design in order to ascertain public views of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The study population includes all social media users, 18 years and above in Nigeria.

The sample size of six hundred (600) was statistically derived. With a 95 percent level of confidence (confidence interval - + 10%), an estimated level of perception of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria at 50% (.5) and a given error margin at .04 (4 percentage points), we arrived at the sample size for the study. The Cochran (1963, p. 75) equation '1' which yields a representative sample for large population was used:

$$n = \frac{[Z/_2]^2 \, (p \, q)}{e^2} \qquad n = \frac{[Z/_2]^2 \, (P)(1-P)}{e^2}$$

Where: n= sample size, Z^2= confidence level, p= rate of occurrence or prevalence (the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in a population), q= complement of p and e= margin of error. Therefore;

n= [1.96]^{2}0.5 (1 - 0.5)   n= 3.8416 (0.25)

  0.05^2 0.0016   n= 600.25 =600 (Approx)

We adopted a web-based purposive sampling. This was done because purposive sampling of inaccessible populations through internet recruitment has become increasingly popular among researchers who, at a relatively low cost, use it to engage large samples of people who are otherwise difficult to access (Barratt, Ferris, Lenton, 2014). To achieve this, we recruited respondents using campaign/advertisements targeted at social media users in Nigeria. The campaigns were launched on Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram. We used four short marketing texts in different combinations (through sharing, on the different platforms) to attract users to indicate interest in participating in the survey. Afterwards, potential respondents were contacted to provide an address to their email, Whatsapp or any other platforms. Individuals who agreed to participate in the study were then sent questionnaire items through each of the addresses they provided. The eligibility criteria were that respondents must: (1) be 18 years and above, with a verifiable social media profile indicating that they reside in Nigeria at the time of the research, (2) be an active member of at least one social media platform – e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. and (3) be willing to respond to questions. The instrument contained two sections. The first section included questions relating to personal demographics. The second section elicited responses on the key research objectives that were developed for the study. In this second section, we developed a questionnaire named: Perceived Response to and Management of the Covid-19 Pandemic Questionnaire (PRMCPQ). The scale is divided in to three sub-sections. The first subsection focused on social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic. We understand that a huge difference exists between public policy response to disease outbreaks and economic crises/natural disasters. We therefore set questions around issues concerning some of the fiscal and social protection responses and other measures designed for the pandemic. We asked respondents to indicate the extent of their satisfaction towards the implementations of the social/public policies which have so far been announced. This was a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The second sub-section focused on the exercise of Nigeria's government emergency powers. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with regards to government's use of emergency powers during the pandemic. Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Finally, the third sub-section focused on the roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with regards to each of the roles itemized. Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We performed reliability analyses for

each sub-scale developed for the study. The Cronbach's alpha (α) was used in this regard. None of the items in each scale was deleted because they showed an impressive Cronbach's alpha (α). We found that α scores for the three sub-section of the questionnaire: Social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic, government emergency powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic and roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic were .86, .80 and .83, respectively. The combined α score for the scales was .87. To have an adequate internal reliability, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha should be above α= >0.7 (e.g., Ale, 2020; Melugbo et al., 2020; Olijo, 2020; Pallant, 2010). Therefore, the results were found to be respectful and this provided the opportunity for further parametric analyses to be performed.

In the administration of the questionnaire instrument, emails, Whatsapp and Facebook attachment (in the Microsoft document format) were sent to respondents who had signed up for the study. Reminders were sent to them from time to time to ensure that they filled out the questionnaire on time. A consent form was also attached to the questionnaire items that were distributed through the social media and other Internet platforms (i.e., emails). Respondents were instructed on how to fill out the questionnaire using the symbol sign on the MS word (√) to tick their desired space.

The descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The aim was to describe and compare the relationship and variance among variables of interests to the study. Among descriptive statistics methods, percentages and proportions measures were used. Items from the three sub-sections of the questionnaire were described using percentages. To compare and test the significance of the mean between demographic groups, t-test and ANOVA were used. While t-test was adopted where there were only two groups (i.e., gender), one-way ANOVA was used where there were more than two groups. The Cohen's d effect size, which shows the magnitude of the difference (whether it is small, medium or large) between the mean scores of respondents across the three sub-scales, was reported according to Cohen's (1988) guideline for effect size.

Results

From the demographic data, the largest age group was the 18-27 range (41.2%), followed by 28-37 (24.2%). The smallest was the above 58 years range (6.6%). Concerning financial situation, the highest number of respondents (62.4%) self-reported having insufficient income. The smallest the group (4.9%), reported 'more than enough'. There were more males (61.0%) than females (39.0%). A large majority had tertiary education (74.9%). A very few respondents did not have formal education (8.9%). The percentage responses to the social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic, government emergency

powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic and roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic are displayed in Tables 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The results in Table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the implementations of the loans designed to boost local manufacturing and production across major sectors of the economy. However, many of the respondents were not satisfied with implementation of the provision of credit assistance targeted towards the health sector at time like this (the Covid-19 pandemic). As to the implementation of the repayment of moratorium for all TraderMoni, Marketmoni and FarmerMoni loans, a great majority showed dissatisfaction. The majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the implementation of the suspension of proposed new electricity tariff. On the contrary, few were satisfied with the way the reduction in the price of PMS was implemented.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of the answer about social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic

Social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic	VD	D	NS/D	S	VS
Loans to boost local manufacturing and production across critical sectors	9.3%	13.8%	30.7%	32.5%	13.7%
Provision of credit assistance for the health industry to meet the potential increase in demand for health services and products	42.2%	17.2%	18.2%	17.3%	5.2%
Commencement of a three-month repayment moratorium for all TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans	37.8%	36.0%	9.2%	9.0%	8.0%
Some restrictions on exportation of masks have been implemented	13.8%	9.3%	9.0%	57.5%	10.3%
The Federal Government seeks to cut planned spending in the 2020 budget by about ₦1.5 trillion (USD 4 billion), including a 20 percent cut to capital expenditure and a 25 percent cut to recurrent expenditure	16.8%	1.3%	52.5%	13.3%	16.0%
Suspension of new electricity tariff (The National Assembly recently postponed the effective date of the new tariff to the first quarter of 2021)	6.7%	19.0%	11.7%	35.5%	27.2%

Reduction in the price of PMS following the continued downward trend in oil price	31.7%	27.0%	10.3%	13.3%	17.7%
Extension of filing due date for Value Added Tax (VAT) from the 21st day to the last working day of the month, following the month of deduction	2.0%	10.3%	50.0%	3.0%	34.7%
Nigeria Immigration Service payment waiver for visitors affected by travel ban	9.3%	13.8%	30.7%	32.5%	13.7%

Note. VD= very dissatisfied, D= dissatisfied, NS/D= neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, S=satisfied and VD= very satisfied

Information in Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents were in support of the lockdown of social and economic activities in the country. Nevertheless, slightly over half of the respondents believed that the ways and manners in which the lockdown restrictions were enforced have led to human rights abuses in the country. More than half of the respondents equally indicated that the legislative arm of the government has continued to provide checks and balances measures to control the excesses by the executive during the Covid-19 pandemic. The highest proportion of respondents (44.3%) was of the view that the use of emergency powers at a certain time, led to more deaths than the Covid-19 complications. While the majority maintained that the use of emergency powers by the government has led to autocratic leadership, a few believed that exercise of emergency powers raised citizen's consciousness to check government excesses during this period.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of the answer about government emergency powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic

Government emergency powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic	SD	D	NA/D	A	SA
Lockdowns of various states and a cessation of social and economic activity are necessary	16.7%	12.5%	8.8%	29.5%	32.5%
Enforcements of lockdown restriction have led to a surge in human rights abuses across the country	15.0%	17.8%	13.0%	29.0%	25.2%
The use of executive emergency powers is being met by strict checks and balances measures by the legislative	18.0%	12.5%	8.3%	33.0%	28.2%
At a time, exercise of emergency powers led to more deaths than the Covid19	18.2%	18.0%	19.5%	24.5%	19.8%
The use of emergency powers have impacted negatively on the economy	11.0%	16.5%	10.3%	15.5%	46.7%
The use of emergency powers is raising citizens' consciousness to check government excesses	29.3%	34.5%	5.3%	12.7%	18.2%
The use of emergency powers is leading to autocratic leadership	14.3%	14.5%	8.3%	19.3%	43.5%

Note. SD= strongly disagree, D= disagree, NA/D= neither agree nor disagree, A= agree and SA= strongly agree

The perceptions of the roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that comes with the Covid-19 pandemic are shown in Table 3. A majority of the respondents were of the opinion that each of the responsibilities highlighted in Table 3 were that of the citizens. For example, over half of the respondents (55.3%) indicated that it is their role as citizens to use every media communication channel to call on national leaders and health systems to be proactive in managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of the answer about roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that comes with the Covid-19 pandemic

Roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic	SD	D	NA/D	A	SA
Using every media communication channel to call on national leaders and health systems to be proactive in their response and management of the pandemic	23.3%	10.7%	10.7%	24.0%	31.3%
Taking responsibility (i.e., by practicing the recommended safety guidelines) to prevent contracting Covid-19 at all times	18.7%	8.0%	11.5%	50.0%	11.8%
Helping out vulnerable people in my community in whatever ways I can	14.5%	12.0%	11.5%	20.0%	42.0%
Volunteering to join the fight against Covid-19	17.0%	16.5%	8.7%	30.0%	27.8%
Participating in Covid-19 online courses on infection, prevention and control (IPC) by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)	31.5%	12.2%	8.3%	22.3%	25.7%
Preventing fake and misleading stories or news that could hamper the efforts to tackle Covid-19 and its impact on societies	12.8%	17.3%	13.5%	39.0%	17.3%

Note. SD= strongly disagree, D= disagree, NA/D= neither agree nor disagree, A= agree and SA= strongly agree

The demographic variations in public views of the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic

An independent-samples t-test was performed to ascertain the variation in public views of the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic for both males and females. There was a significant difference in scores for both males (*M*=20.43, *SD*=7.61) and females [*M*=34.55, *SD*=3.86; *t*(565.013)=29.89, *p*=.000]. The magnitude of the difference in the means was medium (eta squared=.05). Furthermore, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was

conducted to determine the mean age differences across respondents' perceptions towards the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the impact of the pandemic. Respondents were divided into four age categories. There was a statistically significant difference in the mean age categories of the respondents [F=(4, 595)=659.5, p=.000].The magnitude of the difference between their mean ages was large (0.8). Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents between 18-27 years (M=16.38, SD=5.88) was significantly different from respondents between 28-37 years (M=28.93, SD=1.06), 38-47 years (M=32.34, SD=2.10), 48-57 years (M=37.59, SD=1.76) and 58 years and above (M=37.51, SD=1.80). Result of a ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean education status scores regarding the respondents' perceptions of the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the impact of the pandemic[F=(3, 596)=0.61, p=.070]. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents with no formal education (M=16.38, SD=5.88) was not significantly different from respondents with primary school education (M=16.93, SD=6.06), secondary school (M=17.33, SD=4.82), and tertiary education (M=16.19, SD=5.76). Result of a ANOVA showed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean financial sufficiency scores regarding the respondents' perceptions of the public/social policies designed to respond to and manage the impact of the pandemic [F=(2, 597)=4012.663, p=.000].Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents who have more than enough (M=18.15, SD=4.00) was significantly different from respondents who have just enough (M=30.11, SD=1.70) and those with insufficient finance (M=30.31, SD=2.00). There was no significant difference between those who have just enough and those with insufficient finance.

Demographic variations in public views of government's emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic

According to the results of the independent samples t test performed to examine the gender variation in public views of government's emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a statistically significant difference [t(448.501)=35.84, p=.000], with females having a higher mean score (M=32.92, SD=2.31) than males (M=17.11, SD=7.88). The effect size estimating the magnitude of the difference was medium (eta squared=.06). The result of a ANOVA test conducted revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean age categories of respondents regarding their views of the government's exercise of emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic[F=(4, 595)=1053.581, p=.000], with large effect size (0.8). Post-hoc tests showed that the mean score for respondents between 18-27 years (M=12.57, SD=5.09) was significantly different from respondents between 28-

37 years (*M*=27.23, *SD*=2.24), 38-47 years (*M*=31.24, *SD*=1.94), 48-57 years (*M*=34.88, *SD*=.32) and 58 years and above (*M*=35.00, *SD*=0.00). Result of a ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in mean educational status scores regarding the respondents' perceptions of government's emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic [*F*=(3, 596)=1061.5, p=.000].Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents with no formal education (*M*=15.37, *SD*=6.18) was significantly different from respondents with formal education. However, the mean scores between respondents with primary school education (*M*=36.18, *SD*=1.02) was not different from those with secondary school (*M*=35.13, *SD*=1.02), and tertiary education (*M*=36.11, *SD*=1.06). Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference in mean financial sufficiency scores regarding the respondents' perceptions of the use of government's emergency powers during the Covid-19 pandemic[*F*=(2, 597)=5291.771, p=.000].Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents with insufficient finance (*M*=33.82, *SD*=1.09) was significantly different from respondents who have enough (*M*=28.12, *SD*=3.01) and those who have more than enough (*M*=29.73, *SD*=2.90). There was no significant difference between those who have enough and those who have more than enough.

Demographic variations in public views with regards to the roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic

Results of the independent samples t test conducted on the gender difference with regards to the role of citizens in tackling the challenges that comes with Covid-10 pandemic shows that females (*M*=28.42, *SD*=1.52) significant differ from males (*M*=14.71, *SD*=7.07) [*t*(408.845)=35.62, *p*=.000]. A medium effect size was found (eta squared=.06). Findings from the analysis of a ANOVA conducted to determine the difference in the mean age categories of respondents with regards to their perceived role (as citizens) in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic. Results showed that respondents mean ages significantly differ in their perceived roles [*F*=(4, 595)=963.937, p=.000]. The magnitude of the difference between the mean was large (0.8). Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD tests showed that the mean score for respondents between 18-27 years (*M*=10.65, *SD*=4.64) was significantly different from respondents between 28-37 years (*M*=23.88, *SD*=2.03), 38-47 years (*M*=27.38, *SD*=1.71), 48-57 years (*M*=29.34, *SD*=.48) and 58 years and above (*M*=30.00, *SD*=0.00). Result of a ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in mean educational status scores regarding the respondents' perception of the role of citizens in tackling the challenges that comes with Covid-10 pandemic[*F*=(3, 596)=8420.511, p=.000]. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean

score for respondents with no formal education (M=18.12, SD=5.92) was significantly different from respondents with formal education. However, the mean scores between respondents with primary school education (M=35.02, SD=1.12) was not different from those with secondary school (M=35.17, SD=1.00), and tertiary education (M=36.00, SD=0.03). Finally, result shows that there was no statistically significant difference in mean financial sufficiency scores regarding the respondents' perceptions of role of citizens in tackling the challenges that comes with Covid-10 pandemic [F=(2, 597)=0.407, p=.804]. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for respondents who have more than enough (M=27.11, SD=3.19) was not significantly different from respondents who have enough (M=28.12, SD=3.00) and those with insufficient finance (M=27.23, SD=3.03). There was no significant difference between those who have enough and those with insufficient finance.

Discussion

This study examined the demographic variations in public views of response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. But first, we assessed the proportion of responses to items on social/public policies designed for the management of the pandemic, government emergency powers with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic and roles of citizens in tackling the challenges that come with the Covid-19 pandemic. We found that many respondents supported the lockdowns of various states and a cessation of social and economic activities. The finding of public support of the lockdowns is consistent with the latest findings of the Edelman Trust Barometer (2020). The survey reported that more than two-thirds of the respondents from 11 countries (including Canada, Germany, U.S., India, Japan) agreed that the highest priority of the government should be saving lives. Nonetheless, many respondents in our study were not satisfied with the implementation of many of the social policies that the government had designed to manage the resulting challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. This is not surprising as a 2020 Edelman survey has shown that Nigerians still distrust government because they believe the leaders lack the ability to address the nation's challenges successfully (Uroko, 2020). Furthermore, we found gender difference in perception of the public/social policies designed to respond to the challenges that come with the pandemic. The findings further revealed that, on average, women expressed more dissatisfaction towards the social/public policies compared to men. A plausible reason for this gender difference could be associated with the reality of gender inequality which tends to worsen during such crises. As Tirivayi et al. (2020) have observed, women lose their jobs, assets, and experience gender based-violence during crises or emergencies. This finding therefore highlights the importance of creating gender focused policies capable of addressing the policy

implementation challenges of the current pandemic. We also found that age is an important factor in the understanding of public/social policy response to the challenges of Covid-19. Specifically, older people appeared to be more dissatisfied than their younger counterparts.

Studies like that of Morrow-Howell et al. (2020) have identified that older adults are more vulnerable to negative economic impacts during crisis such as Covid-19 pandemic. This called for more robust approaches that need to increase focus on the adult population as we begin to recover from the crises. In our study, we realize that such dissatisfaction coming from the aging population could also be a pointer to what older adults are struggling with during this period. According to our findings, education was not a significant factor that might affect how people perceive the policy initiatives to address the challenges of the pandemic. However, respondents' self-reported financial sufficiency was a factor to consider. Specifically, those who had insufficient finance were more dissatisfied with the implementation of government policies during the pandemic compared to those who had more than enough. This outcome is not surprising since people who do not have insufficient finance are among the hardest hit groups economically during this pandemic. Similar research like that Sengupta and Jha (2020) had revealed that poor migrant workers in India were mostly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic experiences of the lockdown. As a result, we believe that the impact of might have informed the direction of responses in the study. Altogether, these findings highlight important socio-economic factors that social and economic policy makers and interventionists could look at during this period.

As to how the government responded to the Covid-19 pandemic using lockdowns and restrictions of social and economic activities, many people expressed the views that the government and law enforcement agents have abused their emergency powers. According to our findings, this abuse of powers and office has exposed the intentions of the political leaders and has negatively affected citizen's consciousness to check government excesses during this pandemic. These findings are consistent with recent reports on governments' use of emergency powers in many other countries (e.g., Hungary, Israel, Philippines McCarthy, Estrin & Kakissis, 2020; TI, 2020). However, our findings showed that the legislative arm of the federal government of Nigeria has continued to provide checks and balances to control the excesses from the executive during the Covid-19 pandemic. This finding is also similar to that of Ginsburg and Versteeg (2020) who reported that, contrary to common expectations, courts, legislatures and sub-national governments have played crucial roles in constraining national executives. In Nigeria, there have been times that the legislative arm has had to step in to check unfavorable decisions of the federal government. For instance, the National Assembly recently waded

into the controversy surrounding the planned hike in electricity tariff by deferring the plan until the first quarter of 2021. Further analysis revealed that women were more likely to perceive the use of emergency powers by the government as an abuse of power than their male counterparts. Such perception may have been influenced by the fact that women have been shown to be more likely to feel the impact of the Covid-19 in terms of poverty, unemployment, and violence, compared to men. Financial sufficiency was also identified as an important factor in explaining views about the use of emergency powers. Respondents with insufficient finance faulted the use of emergency powers by the federal government. Compared to the younger adults, older persons were more likely to express the views that government abused their powers during this period. As in the case of gender and financial sufficiency, we believe that older individuals are more vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic and the lockdown restriction compared to the younger adults. This might have explained our outcome as well.

Furthermore, we found that the educational status of respondents helped to explain the pattern of the outcome that the federal government abused their emergency powers during this period. Results showed that those with formal education felt that the federal government abused their emergency powers during this period. We understand the fact that access to formal education can play a big role in shaping how people make sense of democratic governance and human right issues. So, this might have informed the choices in this study. In all, these findings highlight the significance of understanding how demographic characteristics can provide hindsight to how particular gender, age group, economic level might be affected by the politics surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our findings also showed that the majority of the respondents understood what their roles (see, Table 3) were as responsible citizens in a time like this. Regardless, we observed a significant gender difference in the understanding of these roles. For example, females had higher mean scores compared to the males. This suggests that compared to the men, more women in our study were more conscious of the roles they are supposed to play during this pandemic This gendered understanding further helps to confirm the important role of women in protecting their communities. As Lafrenière et al. (2019) have indicated, women serve as early responders and promoters of community resilience during humanitarian crises. We equally found that older respondents have more understanding of their roles compared to the younger individuals. This also suggests that age might be a crucial factor in understanding how citizens play their role during crises or emergencies. Those without formal education were found to have scored lower than those with formal education with regards to their understanding of citizens' roles during the pandemic. Overall, these

findings accentuate the likely impact of such socio-demographic factors as gender, age and education on the ways individuals might perceive their economic, social and political roles in addressing the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. For advocacy and civil right groups who are already involved in responding to the crises accompanying the pandemic, considering how to recruit members and encourage community participation that is gender, age and educational status focused might serve as a promising approach.

Like any other study, this study has some limitations. First, the study used a non-probability sampling technique in the selection of respondents. Second, the study did not use a nationally representative sample. As a result, our findings may not be completely generalizable. Future studies should adopt probability sampling techniques especially when the obstacles (e.g., inability to conduct face to face interviews) presented by the Covid-19 pandemic are overcome. Future research could also increase the sample size in order to improve on the representativeness of the sample.

Conclusion

While this study reflects the respondents' assessment or rating of government efforts in addressing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, it also provides a link between socioeconomic vulnerability of social groups and the perceived successes resulting from societal response to and management of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It particularly gives direction into which categories of the social groups that should be urgently targeted. In other words, economic, political and social Covid-19 policy designs could be enhanced when the needs of the under privileged social groups are carefully considered.

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